

# Circle Of Gold A Vicious Circle

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worry, that they will receive help in selling letters. I have spoken with several people who have not received such help and who are forced to pass on the letters to friends and relatives gratis or who stopped the chain cold by not passing on one of their lists.

In any case, the successful continuance of the chain is entirely dependent on the pyramiding theory, that with each new buyer of a list, the circle of gold will increase doublefold. Obviously a hitch anywhere along the way will decrease the possibility of the maximum amount of money reaching the top name on the list, and so on down the line. No. 12 may do well to make his \$100 dollar investment back, let alone realize any money in the mail.

It seems the way members are getting around the fact that chain letters are illegal, is by sending cash alone, not letters, through the mails with the rationalization that participation in this way protects them from the law. Not so, here are some facts:

Those who buy and sell the chain letter are actually in violation of a Federal law, the U.S. Postal Service said according to a recent news release. If the scheme involves the mailing of money, a bond, or other valuable item, even if the chain letters themselves are not mailed, it is still a violation of the law, the Postal Service said.

More specifically, the Internal Revenue Service Public Affairs division said last week that anyone who receives money, income, from the Circle of Gold, has to report it on his next year's income tax return. It is taxable money. If it is not reported the IRS said, it is considered tax evasion and is punishable by a \$10,000 fine or by five years in prison for each count of evasion.

The IRS said further that big reapers of funds from the Circle of Gold can be tracked down by a variety of methods. Informants, and people who turn lists in to the IRS come in all forms. A large number are

disgruntled members of the chain who didn't realize their fortune or who didn't make their original investment back. Investigations will be made, I was told, if it becomes obvious that individuals made large sums of money.

The Attorney General's office, white-collar crime division, said that the chain is considered illegal under Mass. General Law 271, Section 6A, which describes such activities as an illegal lottery, punishable by Section 7, by a fine of \$3,000 or two and a half years in jail.

The investigator from that office said that policing the chain is next to impossible and not practical, so prosecution is not likely, but strongly advises anybody from joining it because of its intrinsic illegality.

Put aside for a moment all the legal ramifications of receiving money via the supposed golden circle. It is acceptable, after all, to gamble in this society. I don't mind so

much the actual receiving of money from the chain; if you have joined early, are receiving money and somehow getting away with it, good luck to you. What I do mind is the greed, avarice and all the other unattractive qualities which I have witnessed arising in people since this thing started.

Recently, I stopped off at a friend's home in Cohasset. Instead of spending a pleasant Saturday afternoon, I was beset constantly with the advantages of becoming a member. It went on ad nauseum. It was the only topic discussed. There were charts on the wall listing names and graphing out the course of the letter should it prove successful. It had become an obsession.

One of its proponents, a person I have known for many years and whom I would never have suspected would join, was so zealous in his sales pitch that I suggested he

become a real salesman and put some of his soliciting talents to good use. But, he preferred to wait until the money starts rolling in, thank you. Another of the proponents actually got angry at another who was skeptical, and blamed him for his stupidity in not wanting to join in a sure thing (and also for not wanting to contribute to the advancement of the proponent's name on the list).

If these are the subjects of the organizational parties that occur almost any night of the week, they must be tedious at best. Perhaps you may meet people you never met before, fine! What sort of relationship will you establish with the people when the sole topic of conversation is bound to be the Circle of Gold and money.

Apparently, very few can escape the letter's charms, for even town officials are getting into a small \$4 version circulating around Town Hall. Others are getting into the

Circle of Tin, a \$10 variation. A prosperous few are doing the Circle of Platinum which costs \$1000 to become a member.

Furthermore, at any mention of my contempt for the Circle of Gold and my intention to write this commentary, I have received threats, warnings, and advice not to interfere, for it is thought that I will be blamed for an interruption in the circle. I refuse to buy the concept that I will receive money without working for it; the \$100 I would need to join is too hard come by in the first place. I refuse to buy the "blazing gold energy" mumbo jumbo that the cover letter of the lists claims unties people, bringing them money for the evolution of the planet. I refuse to believe that I "deserve" to receive money from other people, another claim the letter makes.

Another adage of my father's, "The world doesn't owe you a living," wised me up on that one.

## Decorators' Show House

South Shore decorators, landscape architects and nurserymen are well represented in this year's Decorators' Show House and Garden Tour/1979, sponsored by the Junior League of Boston, Inc. This year's Show House is the Ralph Emerson Forbes Estate, located at 328 Adams st. in Milton.

Cohasset's Phil Smith of Creative Antiques and Interiors refurbished the butler's pantry into a multi-purpose room. It will house a wine storage area, a bar, and most important a readily available storage area for fine China, linen and crystal. Marge Benson of the Grands Design in Cohasset has created a bright and functional sewing room.

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